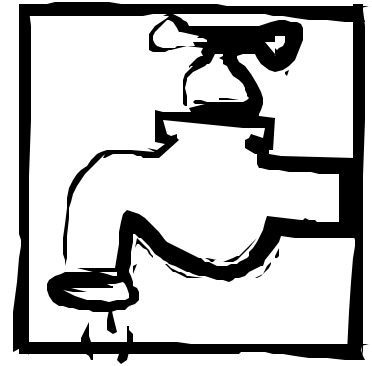


Southwest Washington Health District

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON HEALTH DISTRICT'S DRINKING WATER NEWS

WATER LINES

Issue 3, Volume 2—April 30, 2002



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Special points of interest:

- ◆ A permit is needed before construction begins for multiple drinking-water wells if use is to be more than 5,000 gallons a day.
- ◆ Homes that are part of a development will be treated as one group under this exemption.
- ◆ This rule protects streams, rivers and groundwater resources.

WATER-RIGHT PERMITS REQUIRED

AS PRINTED BY THE SKAMANIA COUNTY *PIONEER*
WEDNESDAY APRIL 24, 2002

The state Supreme Court ruled recently that housing developments that would be served by multiple drinking-water wells need a water-right permit before construction begins if the wells together would withdraw more than 5,000 gallons a day.

State law allows single homes or groups of homes to withdraw up to 5,000 gallons a day without a water-right permit. The court ruled that when homes are part of a development they should be treated as one group under the exemption.

In its decision, the court said, "The Legislature did not intend unlimited use of the exemption for domestic uses, and did not intend that water appropriation for such uses be wholly unregulated."

The case began in 1999 when the firm

Campbell & Gwinn purchased land in Yakima County with the intent of constructing a 20-house development. To avoid needing a water right, the developers proposed to drill multiple wells to serve the subdivision, with each well withdrawing less than 5,000 gallons a day.

Campbell & Gwinn and the Department of Ecology (Ecology) agreed to bring the exemption question before the Yakima County superior Court, which ruled for the developers. Ecology then appealed the decision to the state Supreme Court.

"This decision protects streams and rivers as well as senior water-right holders by preventing large, unregulated groundwater withdrawals, which have been a controversial issue in the Yakima basin and statewide," said Joe Stohr, who supervises Ecology's water-resources program.

"Getting more clarity about which types of wells are exempt from permits and which are not will help reduce the challenges we face in effectively managing Washington's water supplies."



The Health District is Transitioning into Clark County

As you may have heard by now, the Health District will be absorbed by Clark County on January 1, 2003. However, the news about our demise has been greatly exaggerated. Many rumors have been created and disseminated regarding the transition, but in reality, none of it is factual. The only part about this process that Health District staff have been made aware of is that we will be absorbed into the County and that there will be some

administrative changes to how Health District business will be done. Beyond that, no other information is available. If you do hear something other than this, then treat it with extreme skepticism. The Health District is committed to letting our constituents know exactly what will happen as soon as we have factual information.

If you have any questions, please call Mike McNickle at (360) 397-8167.

Conserve Water



When you mow your lawn, leave the grass catcher off and let the grass clippings lay on the lawn. The grass clippings help retain moisture so you can water less. Water lawn early in the morning.



Fix all leaks. You would be surprised how much water is wasted from just a faucet dripping.



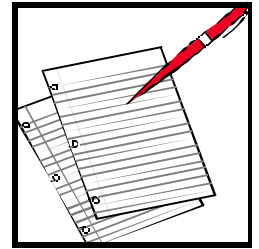
Use a car wash that recycles their water. Try to stop any leaks in your garden hose.



Toilets use the largest amount of water in your home. If your home is old, consider converting to water efficient toilets (1.6 gallons per flush).

Sanitary Surveys of Group A & Group B Water Systems

Southwest Washington Health District Consumer Protection programs staff is actively engaged in routine sanitary surveys, or periodic inspections of a public water system facility and its record keeping. Staff have attended special training classes conducted by a recognized expert in small water system operations,



Mr. Darrell McNeeny, of McNeeny Engineering. Driving this effort are the requirements placed on state agencies through the federal Clean Water Act. In Washington State, the Department of Health Office of Drinking Water (DOH) has prioritized efforts on Group A & Group B water systems according to highest public health impact. These are water systems: 1) of four connections or greater; 2) serving larger populations; or, 3) meeting special criteria necessitating a ranking as a public water system.

The scope of a routine sanitary survey may vary depending on the knowledge of the operator, the condition and complexity of the facilities, and management history of the water system. Typically, the survey includes a documentation review, a site inspection, and assessment of the public water system for the purpose of ensuring that safe and adequate drinking water is provided. A standardized checklist is used to evaluate basic water system features. Photographs are collected to illustrate how the system is designed. Following completion of the facility inspection, copies of all results and documentation are mailed to both the system owner/operator, and to DOH. All surveys will be conducted on a planned and routine schedule to satisfy the requirement for a sanitary survey every 5 years.

Water systems identified to be at a high level of public health risk will be contacted by DOH to seek a reasonable remedy to the problem(s), unless a fix can be accomplished during the survey. Examples of some high risk criteria are cross-connections, untreated surface water sources, inoperable treatment equipment, or failing components where active or potential contamination hazards are obvious (e.g. missing seals or covers, flooding etc.). All operators of surveyed public water systems, regardless of the outcome of the inspection, will be encouraged to maintain a reference list of water system contractors and to seek the expertise of area professionals for routine and emergency assistance.



Joe's Q & A

Q: My landscaping project includes changes to my residential driveway that will conflict with the location of my well. Can I overlap the well with a portion of the new concrete driveway if the wellhead is lowered?

A: It is always best to maintain your wellhead height at least 6" above the ground to help minimize the opportunity for spills, standing water, or other contaminants to gain entry into the well interior. For this reason sub-grade wellheads are discouraged. However, a good design can mitigate the drawbacks.

Build a strong enclosure to protect the wellhead. Make the floor deep enough to allow the top of the casing to rise at least six inches above, and still allow all piping, vents, cables, and projections plenty of clearance with the style of enclosure cover used.

You must have a drain outlet in the enclosure floor to remove any liquids that collect. It is best if the enclosure floor drains to daylight, so this is an important consideration when deciding the level of the floor. A sump pump can be substituted, but a gravity drain is superior. Make sure the drain line outlet is screened to exclude small animals from entering

Grade impervious surfaces surrounding the well enclosure so stormwater and spills will not collect in the well area. Never wash vehicles, or park equipment that has the potential to leak fluids in the well area. Inspect the well enclosure interior, drain system, and the cover several times every year for maintenance needs.

Note: A modification of this type would only be considered appropriate for a well serving a single domestic use.



Health District Testing for Arsenic Levels

The Health District is taking a closer look at the occurrence of arsenic in groundwater. Beginning in late January of this year, all new water availability verifications (WAVE) and small public water system application water sources are being screened for total dissolved arsenic. Using a new Hach Company testing kit we have begun checking drinking water in the field. There is no additional charge to our clients for this screening. Should the screening test indicates a presence of arsenic above a value of 10 parts-per-billion (ppb), a special sample is collected and forwarded for certified laboratory analysis. This lab verification is also at no charge to the customer.

Why are you testing for arsenic?

As you may know, national and international scientific review of the evidence has convinced the USEPA to lower the amount of arsenic allowed in drinking water from 50 ppb to 10 ppb. Arsenic is



a toxic heavy metal that can contaminate drinking water by runoff of arsenical pesticides, dissolution of natural mineral deposits, atmospheric deposition, industrial releases, or improperly disposed chemicals. Chronic arsenic ingestion from drinking water is known to cause skin cancer, and there is substantial evidence that it increases risk for cancers of the bladder, lung, kidney, liver, colon, and prostate. All public drinking water supplies, and new domestic water sources will have to comply with the 10 ppb standard by 2006.

I can still get my WAVE letter, right?

Since screening began, the majority of well water examined has contained less than 10-ppb total arsenic. Water sources exhibiting these low levels meet both the current, and future drinking water arsenic standards. A smaller number of water wells have demonstrated arsenic levels in the 10-50 ppb range. This outcome will not prohibit the release of a W.A.V.E. letter. These results are forwarded in writing to the applicant, advising them, and recommending they pursue a strategy to lower the amount

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Web Sites:

Southwest Washington Health District
www.swwhd.wa.gov

Washington State Division of Drinking Water
www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw

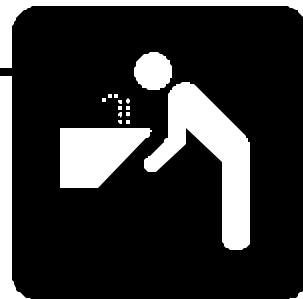
Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Ground Water/Drinking Water
www.epa.gov/OGW/DW

Association of State Drinking Water
www.asdwa.org

Phone Numbers:

EPA State Drinking Water Administrators Hotline
1-800-426-4791

We're on the web!
www.swwhd.wa.gov



of arsenic they will be exposed to. Sites that clearly exceed 50 ppb are above the current Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for drinking water, and are not acceptable as is. This information is also communicated to the applicant. When a building permit is being sought, the District's policy is to provide *conditional approval*. Typically, the condition can be satisfied by finding a higher quality water source or installing arsenic removal devices to remedy the situation. The applicant has the option to proceed with their project up until the point of the Final/Occupancy Permit Inspection under the terms of the conditional approval.

Does the arsenic testing information collected have any use?

It is prudent that we begin to form a picture of where arsenic occurs across the Clark and Skamania regions. This information will be useful assisting individuals in making decisions that could affect their quality of life. Besides notifying individuals, as the data is collected, a water quality database will be assembled and made available to everyone. Our plan: 1) gain a better understanding of our groundwater resources; 2) learn what treatment or mitigation options are practical, and effective; 3) provide better information to the general public, and the water well indus-

